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## ANOTHER TEXAS FLAG.

GEORGE P. GARRISON.

In the plate accompanying the article by Mrs. Looscan in the Comprehensive History of Texas on *The History and Evolution of the Texas Flag* she presents eleven different banners that were the products of the Texas Revolution. Some of them are reproduced from actually existing specimens, but most are simply restorations made from printed descriptions.<sup>1</sup> In the text of the article others still are mentioned. It may be an ungrateful task to add to this rather heterogeneous collection of symbolized outbursts of revolutionary feeling another, or, to speak more strictly, another pair; but I trust the addition will not be wholly unprofitable.

As Mrs. Looscan indicates, the principal variations in the flags made in Texas were due to varying degrees of radicalism on the part of the revolutionary Anglo-Americans. The conservative element, which controlled the Consultation of 1835, opposed severance from Mexico for the time, and favored coöperation with the Mexican liberals in seeking to restore the constitution of 1824, which Santa Anna had overthrown. The same element controlled the council of the provisional government. Gov. Henry Smith, on the other hand, belonged to the party of radical revolutionists; and the essential issue of the unfortunate quarrel between the governor and council which divided the energies and paralyzed the action of the government in the winter of 1835-6 was whether or not the Texans should coöperate with the Mexican liberals. The result of the

<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to note that eight bear the lone star, one of which was brought from Georgia, and another from Ohio. One of the eleven was brought from Kentucky, and eight were made in Texas. Three of this number had stripes in imitation of the United States flag, and three bars of different colors varying in their arrangement. The only difference between Mrs. Looscan's restoration of the Dodson flag, which was made at Harrisburg in September, 1835, and the flag of the Republic adopted in January, 1839, is that the red and white bars of the former are vertical, while those of the latter are horizontal.

quarrel was that there was no consistent policy. The radical revolutionists succeeded in breaking up the Matamoros expedition and spoiling the effort to carry the war into Mexico; but the conservatives, on the other hand, were able to prevent the abandonment of the outposts at Goliad and Bexar. This will serve to explain the meaning of the flag used at the Alamo. It represented the policy of the conservatives in being identical with the Mexican national flag, except that the figures 1824 took the place of the eagle.

During the earlier stages of the revolution, Stephen F. Austin was of the conservative party. He was, in fact, the most prominent and generally trusted man belonging to it; and, after the Texans had actually risen, it was doubtless only the weight of his influence that restrained their hot impulses and turned the scale in its favor. But the progress of events toward the end of the year 1835 made it more and more evident that there could be no resuscitation for "the republican principles," as the declaration of November 7th expressed it, of the constitution of 1824, and that the only hope for Texas was absolute separation from Mexico. Austin held out against this policy until he left Texas near the end of December, 1835, in order to begin his work as a member of the commission to the United States.<sup>2</sup> But in two letters, one to Royall and S. R. Fisher and the other to Gen. Sam Houston, both written from New Orleans and dated January 7, 1836,<sup>3</sup> he declared himself in favor of an unequivocal declaration of independence. His change of attitude removed the most serious obstacle to such a declaration, and it was thenceforth practically certain that the convention which had been called to meet on March first would make that declaration.

Now it became necessary to devise a flag for the new republic which the convention was expected to bring to birth. Just how the matter was approached is not made clear by the materials I have been able to discover; but the evidence indicates that Austin himself prepared a design, which was modified by the commission and, thus changed, was recommended for adoption.

On the eighteenth of January, 1836, Austin wrote a letter from

<sup>2</sup>Austin to Royall, Dec. 25, 1835, printed in Brown's *History of Texas*, I 466-8.

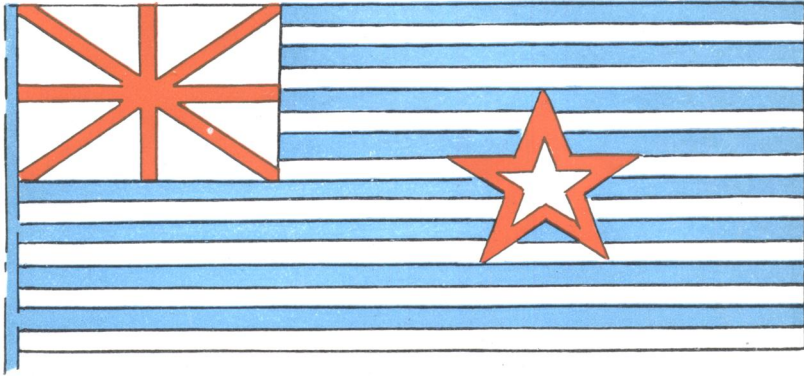
<sup>3</sup>Brown's *History of Texas*, I 469-72.

New Orleans to Gail Borden, Jr., at San Felipe, favoring the declaration of independence. A copy in Austin's own handwriting is among his papers in the possession of Col. Guy M. Bryan, and one of the paragraphs reads as follows: "I shall preach independence all over the U. S. wherever I go. What do you think of the enclosed idea for a flag?" No design accompanies the copy from which I quote; but there is a draft of a flag in the State library at Austin which appears to be the one referred to, although there is no means of showing the connection in time and place. This draft was discovered by Judge Raines, the present librarian, among the Nacogdoches archives, which were turned over to the Secretary of State pursuant to an order of the legislature made in 1850, and transferred to the State library in 1877. In the engraving which accompanies this paper, it is given as No. 1. Judge Raines can recall no accompanying paper that might serve to explain how the design happened to be sent to Nacogdoches. It may not, in fact, have belonged originally among those archives, and may have been placed among them by some negligence while they were in the vaults of the State Department. The best evidence that it is the "idea" referred to in Austin's letter to Borden is the description on the margin and on the back of the sheet containing it. Above the drawing is written, "Idea for an independent flag;" while below are the words: "The shape of the English jack indicates the origin of the North American people. The stripes indicate the immediate descent of the most of the Texans. The star is Texas. The tricolour is Mexican." On the back of the sheet is the endorsement, written in a different hand, "Stephen F. Austin's design of Flag."

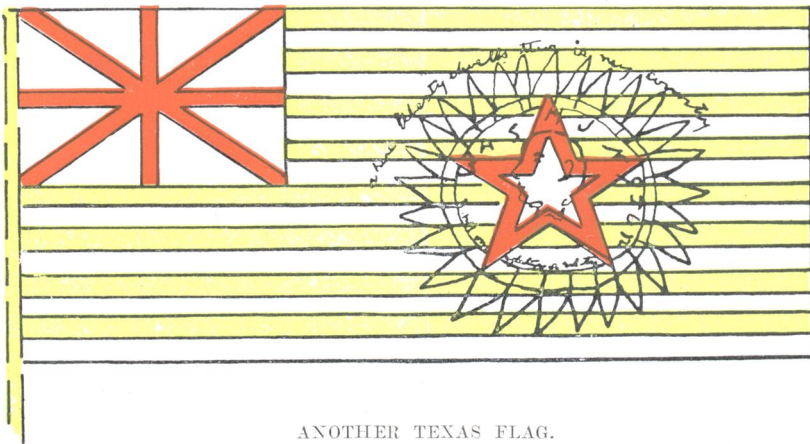
By some accident the paper has had a hole burned in it, but fortunately in such a place as not to destroy any part of the description.

It must, I think, have been a flag made after this design that was presented to Mosely Baker's company at San Felipe in February, 1836. Mrs. Loosean makes up this flag from the description given in the *Telegraph and Register* of Saturday, March 5, 1836, and inserts it as No. 4 in the plate accompanying her article already mentioned. The description is as follows: "The flag presented to the San Felipe company was made according to the pattern proposed for the flag of Texas and of independence. The following is the device: The English Jack, showing the origin of the Anglo-Americans; thirteen stripes, representing that most of the colonists in

1.



2.



ANOTHER TEXAS FLAG.

1. AUSTIN'S DESIGN.
2. THE COMMISSION'S DESIGN.

Texas are from the United States; the star is Texas, the only State in Mexico retaining the least spark of the light of liberty; tricolor is Mexican, showing that we once belonged to that confederacy; the whole flag is historic.”<sup>4</sup> It will be noted that these are nearly the same as the words used to explain the Austin design. Add to this the likelihood of this design’s being adopted at Austin’s home, the fact that Gail Borden, Jr., who presented the flag on behalf of the two ladies that made it, was the man to whom Austin had sent the design, and the statement of the Telegraph and Register that the pattern was that proposed for the flag of Texas and of independence, and there remains little doubt as to the origin and proper make up of the colors given to Baker’s company. The description printed in the Telegraph and Register without the drawing sent by Austin is misleading. In the absence of further information, there could be no reason for presenting the stripes in any other color than the well-known red and white of the United States flag; and the questions as to the proper place of the star and the exact implication in the use of the word “tricolour” became very puzzling. The drawing, however, settles these questions, and makes the description intelligible.

Austin’s design was laid before the other commissioners, and the three expressed themselves concerning it in writing as follows:

“In place of the star, put the *sun* with the head of Washington [*in* marked out] in the center, and rays, representing the light of liberty, radiating all around—Outside of them and above, put the motto—‘Where Liberty dwells there is my country’—Change the stripes from green to blue & have exactly thirteen of them—[Here a line and a half is obliterated] \* \* \* the stripes will then be blue and white—Change the ground of the Jack in the corner from white to yellow, or leave it white either will do, either will make a handsome Texas Jack [*of* marked out], which old Grand Father John Bull need not be ashamed [*of* marked out], or unwilling to acknowledge.

This flag is approved by us and we recommend its adoption.

S. F. AUSTIN,  
B. T. ARCHER.

I object much to the hackneyed quotation ‘Where liberty dwells there is my country.’ Its frequent use by school boys as a motto &

<sup>4</sup>A Comprehensive History of Texas, I 696; Foote’s Texas and the Texans, II 281-3, note.

by Volunteer companies on their banners have rendered it stale & fulsome. Virgil from whom it is taken expresses the sentiment antithetically. In the latin language it has much point and beauty. Ubi Libertas—Ibi Patria. If we are to have it [*at* probably omitted] all let us have it expressed in this way. But I should much prefer that the [*expression* marked out] motto be discarded & that the words 'The light of liberty' or the words *Lux Libertatis* if they are preferred be substituted. The [*words* probably omitted] light of Liberty apply to the sun. Underneath Washington I would have the words, 'In his example—there is safety.' With this alteration I am much pleased with the banner.

WM. H. WHARTON.

I have no objection to the motto *Lux Libertatis*, or Light of Liberty.

S. F. AUSTIN."

This is written partly on the face and partly on the back of a sheet containing a copy of Austin's design apparently exact, except as to the color of the stripes. In the example from which No. 1 is engraved they appear blue, but in the one on which the above is written they are green. The sun and its rays and the head of Washington, making up the complicated device that was to replace the star, are scrawled in free hand on the face of the drawing, and the mottoes are added. The result appears in flag No. 2 of the engraving. The document is without an address or a date, and the precise nature the commissioners meant to give it does not appear. It is now among the records in the Department of State and is in one of the boxes containing the diplomatic correspondence of the Republic.<sup>5</sup> This would indicate that it came as an official communication to the government, but there is nothing to show whether its classification was based on any other grounds than the simple fact that it bears the signatures of the three commissioners. The cover in which it is enclosed has written upon it 1835; but the writing is evidently much more recent than the document itself, and is clearly wrong.

There is one interesting point of seeming connection between this flag and that brought by Ward's battalion from Georgia in the motto so criticized by Wharton. It appears on the design as approved by Austin and Archer in the English form, "Where Liberty dwells there is my country;" while on the Ward flag it is given in the Latin, "*Ubi Libertas habitat, ibi nostra patria est.*" If *our* be used in

<sup>5</sup>File box 24, No. 2338.

place of "my," the translation becomes exact. Could there have been any connection? The Georgia battalion was encamped at Velasco for some days previous to the departure of the commissioners from that vicinity, and Austin or Archer may have seen and been attracted by the motto on its flag. The fact that it was not on Austin's original design would lead to the supposition that it was proposed by Archer. Wharton characterized it as a "hackneyed quotation;" and if this was true no one necessarily owed it to anybody in particular. On the other hand, his reference to the frequent use of it "by Volunteer companies on their banners" might seem to contain a sly suggestion that it was taken from the Ward flag.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting further to note that this elaborate design was actually realized in silk. There is in the collection of Colonel Bryan a letter from Mrs. Holley, dated Lexington, Kentucky, June 1, 1836, and addressed to Austin at Louisville,<sup>7</sup> in which she writes,

among other things, as follows: "\* \* \* Miss James has painted your flag on silk—sun Washington & all—it is beautiful—it is to be presented by Henrietta<sup>8</sup>—with an appropriate speech written for

He said it came from Virgil, meaning, of course, originally; but I have not been able to find it in the writings of that author. The nearest expression to it that I know of in Latin literature is a quotation given by Cicero in the Tusculan Disputations, V. 37, 108, which reads: "*Patria est ubicumque est bene.*" This was located for me by Professor W. J. Battle of the University of Texas. An article in the Texas Almanac for 1861, gives a statement from General McLeod to the effect that the Latin motto placed by Miss Troutman upon the Ward flag "was her own."

General McLeod says also, by the way, that the English inscription on the flag was *Texas and Liberty*. Mrs. Looscan, following the description of Mr. Lewis Washington, quoted in the same article, makes it *Liberty or Death*. I am inclined to believe that General McLeod's version is correct. The rather convincing evidence he offers that he remembers the expressions aright, is supported by the fact that the account of the meeting at which the raising of Ward's company was begun published in an extra of the Georgia Messenger, is headed by the very words, printed in large letters, which General McLeod says were used on the flag. The letter of introduction which Ward brought from Robert Collins to Austin, and which is now among the Austin papers, is written on the fly-leaf of one of these circulars.

<sup>7</sup>The directions show that it followed him to New Orleans.

<sup>8</sup>Daughter of Henry Austin, and niece of Mrs. Holley.



her *by myself*—Friday afternoon. How interesting to have you here.<sup>9</sup> It will be in Mrs. Hart's lawn. We tried to have it today, but the weather has been so bad [that the flag] could not be got dry, and it rains fast—All the military were to parade. We tried to hurry it because some of the troops are to start tomorrow in the Car—There is an encampment and rendezvous in Shelbyville—another is in Louisville—Some have gone on there. \* \* \*

\* \* \* I furnished the silk for the Flag—Gen. McCauley the staff & spear head. \* \* \*

\* \* \* It has been suggested that at the presentation of the Flag in Mrs. Hart's lawn—you being present to make a speech—1-000 \$ or more might be collected you had better come. \* \* \*

What became of this flag? I should be very grateful for any information concerning it.

The ordinary definition of a word calls it the sign of an idea, and it is astonishing to see how much of intense emotion may be sometimes indicated by such a sign. How fitly does the same definition apply to a national ensign; and among all those suggested for Texas, or actually used during the Revolution, there are none that have more significance than Austin's original design and the complicated modification by the commissioners. The mute appeal by the Texans to their near and still nearer of kin which lay in joining the British Jack to the stripes of the American Union was at once proud and pathetic. But had the appeal been answered by the United States with the right degree of unanimous official cordiality, it is likely that our decade of independence and separate national life would have been reduced to a few short months, and that we should now scarcely know the flag of which we are so proud at all.

<sup>9</sup>She doubtless means, *How interesting it would be*, etc.